

January 13, 2020

Jeff Zucker  
President, CNN World  
One CNN Center  
190 Marietta St. NW  
Atlanta, GA, 30303

Dear Mr. Zucker:

We write on behalf of the undersigned organizations and our Hmong community members to express our disappointment and extreme concern with a November 19th, 2019 CNN [article](#) originally entitled, “The Hmong Community in California is experiencing another American milestone: Their First Mass Shooting.” After the community’s outrage over this callous title went viral, the title eventually found its way to the current version that viewers see when they go to the link, “The Hmong community in Fresno is mourning after a mass shooting killed 4 of its men.”

Hmong Americans first resettled in the United States after the Secret Wars in Laos. They have lived in this country for nearly 45 years, with a population of nearly 300,000 within an 18 clan structure. Since they first arrived, this community has achieved many milestones, including their first elected state legislator, first elected judge, and, as of this year, first world class gymnast. As such, the Hmong and broader Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) communities were dismayed to read this article; the title and its callous framing of the mass shooting, misrepresentation of our communities, and factual inaccuracies were lacking in professionalism and good judgment.

Though we appreciate that the headline of the article was quickly changed, we want to continue to engage CNN to address the article’s impact on our communities and to develop strategies on how to avoid such a dehumanizing headline in the future. The article and its original headline “otherizes” the Hmong American community as merely a “refugee community.” It assumes that after more than 40 years in the United States, the Hmong American community is still not American enough. Furthermore, by painting the Hmong community as an insular one, the article suggests that the mass shooting impacts only the Hmong community, rather than the broader Fresno community at large. By juxtaposing that isolation with the frame of the shooting as an isolated, gang-related incident, it portrays this mass shooting as a singular, gang conflict rather than as part of the broader issue of gun violence in America.

Organizations, such as the [Southeast Asia Resource Action Center](#) and [OCA - Asian Pacific American Advocates](#) quickly spoke out against the article. Individuals in places like California,

Minnesota, New York, and North Carolina, expressed their profound disappointment and outrage. Hmong Americans even came out with the hashtag #HmongAmericanMilestone to combat the articles' depiction of this community.

The impact of the article and its characterization of the mass shooting and Hmong community cannot be undone. But we write to request a community meeting with CNN so that we can discuss ways to address how the article has impacted on our communities and move forward. Our requests are provided in more detail below:

1. An explanation for how the headline and article were approved.
2. As is customary for changes to articles, the addition of a correction notes, or an addendum to the article explaining why the title was changed twice and why the headline was changed.
3. A follow-up feature on Hmong Americans in Fresno.
4. Diversity training for reporters and editors involved with the article's publication.

The communities affected by the November 17, 2019 shooting in Fresno, CA continue to mourn and many remain hurt and angry over the article. We hope that CNN can work with us and our communities to address the negative impacts this story has caused in the community to usher in peace, understanding, and healing.

Sincerely,



John C. Yang  
President & Executive Director  
Asian Americans Advancing Justice | AAJC



Quyen Dinh  
Executive Director  
Southeast Asia Resource Action Center



Bao Vang  
President & Chief Executive Officer  
Hmong National Development